

"The Columns," Benjamin Chaires House  
Southwest corner, Park and Adams Streets  
Tallahassee  
Leon County  
Florida

HABS No. FLA-158

HABS

FLA

37-TALA,

3-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

"THE COLUMNS," BENJAMIN CHAIRES HOUSEHABS  
FLA  
37-TALA  
3-

Location: Southwest corner, Park and Adams Streets (Lots 183, 184) Tallahassee, Leon County, Florida

Present Owner: First Baptist Church, Tallahassee, Florida

Present Use: Unoccupied

Brief Statement of Significance: One of the oldest dwellings in Tallahassee, built for Benjamin Chaires; banker, landowner, and proprietor of the brick yard.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners:  
1835 Major Benjamin Chaires  
1856 General William Bailey  
-- Alban Stewart  
1960 First Baptist Church
2. Date of erection: 1830-1835
3. Architect and builder: Unknown. Chaires was proprietor of the brick yard that also made bricks for the State Capitol.
4. Notes on alterations and additions: East wing of the building is an addition as is the appendage to the south.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: According to tradition, the house was used as a refuge for women and children during the Indian Wars.

C. Sources of Information: Chester Lee Craft Jr., Materials from the files of the Florida North Chapter, A.I.A., Tallahassee, Florida.

Federal Writers' Project, Florida, A Guide to the Southern-most State (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939).

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

## A. General Statement:

1. Three-story brick structure of Greek Revival style with

four-columned portico, a good example of mid-nineteenth century town house construction.

2. Condition of Fabric: Good, although the interior has been extensively remodelad.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Approximately 94' (north front) x 78', two stories.
2. Foundations: Brick foundation walls.
3. Wall construction: Brick bearing wall, deep red, handmade brick, 2-5/8" x 8" exposure, common bond.
4. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: Four-columned portico with porches at first and second floor, wood floors, wood railings with turned balusters. Triangle fan louver in portico gable, or pediment. Doric porch columns on pedestals, stuccoed masonry.
5. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys, four flues each.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Doorway with transom light of old glass in diamond shaped lights. Two doors, four panels each, with beveled edge glass in one panel.
  - b. Windows and shutters: Six over six light double hung windows. Some wood louvered shutters remain.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof over house and portico. Sheet metal covering.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: Simple wood cornice with boxed eave.

C. Technical Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:
  - a. Ground floor: Large spaces for storage. One space has been used for laundry, kitchen, etc.; brick hearth remains.
  - b. First floor: Central stair hall: flanked by four rooms of original house, leads to miscellaneous modern rooms in rear and leads to ground floor.
  - c. Second floor: Central hall flanked by four rooms,

- stairs to attic. One screened porch (in portico).
2. Stairways: "U" shaped left hand wood stairway to second floor, two rectangular balusters per tread. Volute at bottom newel, molded mahogany railing. Stair to ground floor under second floor stair, lighted by fan light into stair hall.
  3. Flooring: Pine boards, 5-1/2" wide.
  4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster on wood lath. Plaster on brick walls extending from ground to attic.
  5. Doorways and doors: Wood doors, generally six panels, mortised and tenoned with pegged joints.
  6. Trim: Simple fireplace trim with cornice and pilasters. Simple molded chair rail.
  7. Hardware: Butt hinges on interior doors, 1/4" plate, appear to be original. Some shutter hardware remains.
  8. Lighting: Modern electrical.
  9. Heating: Fireplaces in each room with space heaters.
- D. Site: On a level corner lot, immediately north of the Bank of Florida (1828) and across Park Street from the First Presbyterian Church (1832).

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